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METHOD ORIENTATION OF ADULTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIVE ACTIVITIES. PAPER PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH (CHICAGO, FEBRUARY 11-13, 1968).

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THIS STUDY WAS UNDERTAKEN TO DETERMINE THE METHOD ORIENTATION OF ADULTS (SPECIFICALLY, 611 RESIDENTS OF PREDOMINANTLY RURAL COLUMBIA COUNTY, WISCONSIN) FOR PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, HOBBIES AND RECREATION, ACADEMIC OR GENERAL EDUCATION, RELIGION, MORALS AND ETHICS, HOME AND FAMILY LIFE, PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, CURRENT EVENTS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AND CITIZENSHIP. GROUP ORIENTED METHODS INCLUDED CLASSES, DISCUSSION GROUPS, SHORT COURSE OR LECTURE SERIES, AND WORKSHOPS OR INSTITUTES. INDIVIDUAL METHODS INCLUDED TAKING CORRESPONDENCE COURSES, STUDYING BOOKS OR OTHER PRINTED MATTER, CONSULTING EXPERTS OR SPECIALISTS, READING NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES, AND WATCHING TELEVISION AT HOME. CERTAIN SOCIOECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND FACTORS WERE ALSO CONSIDERED. FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE SUBJECT AREAS, GROUP METHODS WERE PREFERRED BY THE MAJORITY OF ADULTS. WITHIN SUBJECT AREAS, ADULTS PREFERRING INDIVIDUAL METHODS WERE MORE LIKELY TO BE OLDER, WITH RELATIVELY LOW EDUCATIONAL LEVELS AND FAMILY INCOMES, WITH THE HIGHEST PROPORTION OF INDIVIDUAL ORIENTATION APPEARING AMONG WOMEN WITH EIGHT YEARS OR LESS OF SCHOOLING. (THE DOCUMENT INCLUDES FOOTNOTES AND FIVE TABLES.) THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH, CHICAGO, FEBRUARY 11-13, 1968. (LY)

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For Discussion Purposes

METHOD ORIENTATION OF ADULTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIVE ACTIVITIES

BY

Donald J. Blackburn and Mohammad A. Douglah

Paper presented at the National Seminar on Adult Education Research at Chicago, Illinois, on February 12, 1968.

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METHOD ORIENTATION OF ADULTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIVE ACTIVITIES

by

Donald J. Blackburn and Mohammad A. Douglah

The purpose of this study was to determine the method orientation of adults for participation in adult educational experiences in different subject matter areas, and to identify and describe selected factors which were thought to influence method orientation. It was thought that this study would provide additional insight into the complex field of adult motivation to participate in educational endeavors.

The impact of an educational program upon society is determined by the kind of people who participate in the program. With contemporary accelerating changes in society, it is imperative that persons receive some form of education beyond secondary school level. If the tremendous expenditure of time and money by governmental and community agencies and organizations is to result in programs which will reach those for whom they are intended, all possible information concerning who participates or fails to participate in continuing education is greatly needed.

Various studies have found that, generally, individuals with less than an eighth grade education, those from lower socio-economic levels, those from certain ethnic and cultural groups, and those over 55 years of age do not tend to be involved in adult education programs. However, these latter groups are the people for whom major educational programs, such as

the multi-dimensional poverty programs, are being formulated and implemented at this time. There is a real danger that the effectiveness of many of these programs will be impeded by adult educators' limited knowledge in the area of adult participation. Present patterns of organization and educational opportunities seem to be adapted to those who participate rather than to those who don't. Past research measures of participation have emphasized involvement in group oriented activities, whereas it is possible that an adult can be an intensive continuing learner without being involved in many group type educational methods.

Adults participate in educational activities through a variety of methods, some of which are group oriented, while others are individual oriented. The extent to which these broad modes of participation and the specific methods within each category appeal to the adult learner could greatly influence his initial decision to participate and subsequent level of participation. It is assumed here that one of the significant factors contributing to apparent nonparticipation in educational programs is the individual preference to learn the subject matter by methods other than those available. Few studies have dealt with the concept of the method orientation of adults. The significance of this concept was supported by Johnstone[1] in a nationwide study of participation in adult education. In a very brief examination of educational method preferences, he found that various individuals expressed different preferences for methods

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1. John W. C. Johnstone and Ramon J. Rivera, Volunteers for Learning. National Opinion Research Center, Chicago, 1965, p. 214.

to learn a foreign language as well as an academic subject. He also found, for example, that older adults and adults of lower socio-economic status are consistently less likely to prefer the classroom setting. Tough's[2] study of college graduates found that the majority had conducted one or more self-directed teaching projects during the preceding year. These findings aroused our initial interest and prompted us to raise several questions regarding this whole conceptual area of method orientation.

What are the methods preferred by individuals in studying various subject matter areas and to what extent do these orientations vary in the adult population? Are the educational method orientations of individuals, for studying particular subject matter areas, related to their background characteristics? For example, is there a difference between men and women in their method orientations for learning particular subject matter? To what extent does age influence method orientation? Do low socio-economic adults consistently prefer non-group oriented methods regardless of the subject matter to be learned? How do the factors of level of formal educational attainment, residential locality, and level of income affect method orientation? Do adults characterized by high withdrawal tendencies seek individual methods whereas those low in this trait seek group oriented methods?

Before proceeding further, it might be well to define the concepts of group and individual method orientations.

By method orientation we mean the preference expressed by an adult in selecting a method(s) through which to become involved in educative behavior.

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2. Allan M. Tough, "The Teaching Tasks Performed by Adult Self-Teachers." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1965.

Group methods are those which a potential learner might utilize for participation in educative activity which normally permit direct personal interaction by two or more learners with a teacher or teachers in face-to-face situations. Individual methods are those which a potential learner might utilize for participation in educative activity entirely alone or with direct or indirect association with a teacher.

Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the method orientation of adults for participation in adult educational experiences in different subject matter areas. The method orientations were classified into:
   a. Group oriented methods which included: Enrolling in a class, attending a short course or lecture series, joining a discussion group, and taking part in a workshop or institute.
   b. Individual oriented methods which included: Taking correspondence courses, studying books or other printed materials, consulting specialists or experts, reading newspapers or magazines and watching television at home.

Subject matter areas were:

a. Vocational
b. Hobbies and recreation
c. Religion, morals and ethics
d. Academic or general education
e. Home and family life
f. Personal development
g. Current events, public affairs and citizenship

2. To determine the relationships, if any, between certain background factors and the method orientation of adults to participate in educational experiences in different subject matter fields. The factors used included:

   a. Sex

   b. Age

   c. Residence location

   d. Formal education

   e. Family income

   f. Informal visiting patterns

   g. Organizational participation

   h. Social skills

   i. Withdrawing tendencies

   j. Self-reliance

Procedures

Population and Sample

The data used in this study were obtained from a sample of adult residents in Columbia County, Wisconsin. This county is located in south-central Wisconsin and has a predominately rural population. Of the 36,708 people in the county in 1960, 27 percent were classified as rural farm, 43 percent were rural non-farm, and the balance were urban. Median age of the population was 32 years at the last census, while the median number of school years completed was ten. The median family income was $4,874.

A multi-stage, area, probability sampling procedure was used which yielded 611 completed interviews which constituted 86 percent response rate.

Instrumentation

The following technique was utilized in determining the method orientations of adults. Simple hypothetical cases were developed in which respondents were asked to assume they wanted to learn some particular subject material. They were requested to select a method they would most prefer to use in order to study the indicated subject matter in each hypothetical case.

Three hypothetical cases were developed within each of the seven subject matter categories. This was done in order to be more discriminating as to method preference and to reduce the influence of an example that might have been somewhat inappropriate for an individual respondent. Subject matter examples utilized tended to be those most frequently studied by adults within each subject matter area[3].

An example of one of the hypothetical cases used was as follows:

> Suppose you want to learn about different religions of the world. If this kind of material is being offered or is available through each of the methods listed on this card, which one of the methods would you most prefer for studying about different religions of the world?

The instrument was pre-tested twice and, based on these pre-tests, we were relatively satisfied with the reliability of the instrument.

Findings

Method Orientation

Table I contains the distribution of the specific methods selected for each subject matter area. It is interesting to note that attending

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3. See Johnstone and Rivera, op. cit., pp. 41-52, for an outline of types of subject matter studied by adults in their national study.

classes was ranked as the most preferred method for participation for three out of the seven subject matter areas, and it was ranked second for a fourth area. Apparently the traditional method of formal education through class room instruction is perceived as being an appropriate method for continuing education.

On the other hand, mass media (newspapers and television) were not perceived as significant methods for educational purposes for practically any of the subject matter areas with the exception of current events, where they were ranked first and second respectively.

In addition to the above, the following observations are worth noting:

1. Discussion groups were perceived as the primary method for studying religious subjects. One might have suspected that specialists or experts, which in this case might presumably be members of the clergy, would have been selected as the first choice. However, this was not the case.
2. The only subject matter where more than 10 percent of the respondents expressed a preference to learn through books or pamphlets was in the family life subject area.
3. The observation that specialists and experts were ranked fourth or higher for all except one subject matter area is indicative of the relative degree of importance that is attached to this method of continuing education.

For purposes of cross tabulating method orientation with the selected background characteristics, respondents were categorized into group or individual method oriented within each subject matter area based on the

majority of group vs individual methods selected. Table II shows the frequency distribution of respondents according to this categorization. It can readily be observed that the majority of respondents expressed group method preferences in all except the family life and current events subjects.

Factors Related to Method Orientation

Of the various characteristics considered in this study, formal educational attainment, age, and level of family income were those that showed the most consistent significant association with method orientation.[4]

The findings of this study show that level of formal education is the most important factor influencing adults in their expression of preference toward educational methods. The general trend across all subject areas (see Table III) showed a relatively lower proportion of the less educated with group method orientation compared to the highly educated. The proportion of group method orientations tended to increase with increased education.

The most consistently observed trend was the comparatively larger proportion of individual method orientation among women who had attained eight years or less of formal education. This observation was evident throughout, although the relative proportions varied somewhat depending on the subject area. Over one-half of the least educated category of women preferred individual methods even in four subject areas where the majority of adults preferred group methods (namely hobbies, religion, academic and personal development subject areas).

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4. The chi-square test was used to determine the relationship between method orientation and selected variables.

As far as age is concerned, a substantially lower proportion of older respondents (60 years and older) preferred group methods compared to young and middle aged adults. In hobbies, religion, and personal development subjects where a majority of respondents expressed group method orientation, over one-half of the older men preferred individual methods. A similar finding was noted for older women in the religious subject matter area. The sociological dimension of the concept of disengagement[5], which is commonly associated with a decreased interaction between the aging person and others in the social group to which he belongs, might be offered as a possible explanation for the above noted findings.

The trends observed concerning level of family income were somewhat comparable to the previously noted trends under formal education. As family income decreased, the proportion of adults expressing individual method orientation tended to increase. This trend was stronger among females than males. These observations are in accord with Johnstone's conclusion that older adults and adults of lower socio-economic status, particularly older women, were consistently less likely to prefer group settings[6]. Weller[7] suggested that low socio-economic status persons may avoid group participation because of fear, a sense of inadequacy, difficulty in expressing themselves, inability to handle personal differences, and almost anti-social behavior in groups other than their own. These factors may partially explain the findings in this study.

An overall summary statement of our findings could be stated in the following manner: For the majority of the subject matter areas used in

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5. Elaine Cumming and W.E. Henry, Growing Old, Basic Books, 1961.

6. Johnstone and Rivera, op. cit., pp. 212-214.

7. Jack E. Weller, Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, 1965, p. 142.

this study, group methods were preferred by the majority of adults. Individual methods were preferred for family life and current event subjects. Within subject matter areas, adults expressing a preference for individual methods were more likely to be older with a low level of educational attainment and a low family income.

These findings suggest that the chances for achieving a wide and cross-sectional involvement of adults in educational endeavors can be enhanced when educational opportunities are made available through both group and individual methods. Group methods are likely to continue to be more attractive to the highly educated, middle and upper class segments of the population; however, more intensive efforts need to be made to explore the various possible ways of reaching the older and less educated segment of the population through individualized methods of instruction.

TABLE I

Percentage Distribution of Specific Methods Preferred by Respondents to Study Three Topics in Each Subject Matter Area

Methods	Subject Matter						
	Vocational	Hobby	Religious	Academic	Family Life	Personal Development	Current
Classes	22%	19%	9%	38%	8%	27%	10%
Short Course	18	9	10	15	11	17	11
Discussion Group	4	3	25	3	7	3	13
Workshop	18	22	6	2	12	6	5
Correspondence	6	4	3	9	4	4	3
Specialists or experts	14	16	11	9	18	14	8
Books or pamphlets	4	7	10	8	18	5	8
Newspaper, magazines	2	4	7	1	8	2	18
TV	2	4	8	3	2	9	15
Other	1	1	1	--	1	1	--
Not ascertained	9	11	10	12	11	12	9
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	N=1512	1833	1833	1833	1833	1833	1833

TABLE 11

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' METHOD ORIENTATIONS BY SUBJECT MATTER AREA

Subject Matter Areas	Method Orientation Categories					
	Group		Individual		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Vocational	343	76%	103	24	446	100%
Hobbies and Recreation	343	65%	188	35	531	100%
Religious, Moral, and Ethics	310	58%	227	42	537	100%
Academic or General Education	376	72%	149	28	525	100%
Home and Family Life	225	42%	307	58	532	100%
Personal Development	343	65%	183	35	526	100%
Current Events, Public Affairs, Citizenship	223	41%	327	59	550	100%

TABLE ~~27~~ III

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' METHOD ORIENTATIONS FOR STUDYING DIFFERENT SUBJECT MATTER BY FORMAL EDUCATION AND SEX

Subject Matter Method Orientation	Formal Education and Sex									
	Male					Female				
	0 - 8 Years	9-11 Years	12 Years	Some College	College Grad	0 - 8 Years	9-11 Years	12 Years	Some College	College Grad
Vocational										
Group	66%	87%	70%	82%	100%	55%	68%	86%	79%	96%
Individual	34	13	30	18	-	45	32	14	21	4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	56	30	84	22	20	38	31	94	47	24
	$X^2 = 12.926$		$P = .02$	$\bar{C} = .32$		$X^2 = 21.607$		$P = .001$	$\bar{C} = .39$	
Hobbies and Recreation										
Group	59%	71%	60%	45%	52%	46%	70%	75%	75%	79%
Individual	41	29	40	55	48	54	30	25	25	21
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	69	34	86	20	21	63	47	114	53	24
	$X^2 = 3.956$		$P = N.S.$			$X^2 = 19.183$		$P = .001$	$\bar{C} = .32$	

TABLE 27 -- Continued

Subject Matter Method Orientation	Formal Education and Sex									
	Male					Female				
	0 - 8 Years	9-11 Years	12 Years	Some College	College Grad	0 - 8 Years	9-11 Years	12 Years	Some College	College Grad
Religion, Morals, and Ethics										
Group	45%	65%	59%	85%	70%	36%	53%	64%	62%	83%
Individual	55	35	41	15	30	64	47	36	38	17
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	74	34	85	20	20	67	47	114	53	23
	$X^2 = 13.298$ P = .01 $\overline{C} = .31$					$X^2 = 21.618$ P = .001 $\overline{C} = .34$				
Academic or General Education										
Group	63%	84%	74%	82%	95%	48%	43%	78%	85%	100%
Individual	37	16	26	18	5	52	57	22	15	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	68	31	86	22	20	62	47	112	53	24
	$X^2 = 11.114$ P = .05 $\overline{C} = .29$					$X^2 = 48.788$ P = .001 $\overline{C} = .50$				
Home and Family Life										
Group	43%	53%	38%	65%	30%	27%	30%	51%	45%	48%
Individual	57	47	61	35	70	73	70	49	55	52
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	72	36	84	20	20	64	47	113	53	23
	$X^2 = 7.508$ P = N.S.					$X^2 = 13.738$ P = .01 $\overline{C} = .28$				

TABLE III -- Continued

Subject Matter Method Orientation	Formal Education and Sex									
	Male					Female				
	0 - 8 Years	9-11 Years	12 Years	Some College	College Grad	0 - 8 Years	9-11 Years	12 Years	Some College	College Grad
Personal Development										
Group	51%	59%	75%	67%	85%	48%	55%	71%	74%	79%
Individual	49	41	25	33	15	52	45	29	26	21
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	69	34	87	21	20	58	49	112	54	24
	$X^2 = 13.955$ P = .01 $\overline{C} = .32$					$X^2 = 14.663$ P = .01 $\overline{C} = .29$				
Current Events, Public Affairs, Citizenship										
Group	26%	60%	34%	59%	50%	23%	42%	43%	54%	62%
Individual	74	40	66	41	50	77	58	57	46	38
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	77	35	87	22	20	70	48	113	54	24
	$X^2 = 17.475$ P = .005 $\overline{C} = .35$					$X^2 = 17.817$ P = .005 $\overline{C} = .31$				

TABLE ~~3~~ IV

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' METHOD ORIENTATIONS FOR STUDYING DIFFERENT SUBJECT MATTER BY CHRONOLOGICAL AGE AND SEX

Subject Matter Method Orientation	Chronological Age and Sex					
	Male			Female		
	21-39 Years	40-59 Years	60 and Older	21-39 Years	40-59 Years	60 and Older
Vocational						
Group	70%	84%	66%	81%	84%	61%
Individual	30	16	34	19	16	39
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	84	93	35	98	92	44
	$X^2 = 6.587$	P = .05	$\overline{C} = .25$	$X^2 = 9.282$	P = .01	$\overline{C} = .28$
Hobbies and Recreation						
Group	64%	62%	47%	69%	74%	60%
Individual	36	38	53	31	26	40
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	87	90	53	110	104	86
	$X^2 = 4.478$	P = N. S.		$X^2 = 4.054$	P = N. S.	

TABLE ~~5~~ IV -- Continued

Subject Matter Method Orientation	Chronological Age and Sex: Male 21-39 Years	Male 40-59 Years	Male 60 and Older	Female 21-39 Years	Female 40-59 Years	Female 60 and Older
Home and Family Life						
Group	44%	48%	36%	51%	43%	28%
Individual	56	52	64	49	57	72
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	87	90	55	110	103	87
	X^2 = 1.810	P = N. S.		X^2 = 11.021	P = .005	$\overline{C}$ = .27
Personal Development						
Group	69%	72%	47%	67%	71%	55%
Individual	31	28	53	33	29	45
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	88	92	51	110	102	82
	X^2 = 9.808	P - .01	$\overline{C}$ = .29	X^2 = 5.340	P = N. S.	
Current Events Public Affairs, Citizenship						
Group	39%	48%	26%	50%	48%	26%
Individual	61	52	74	50	52	74
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	88	92	61	111	103	94
	X^2 = 7.199	P = .05	$\overline{C}$ = .25	X^2 = 15.042	P = .001	$\overline{C}$ = .31

TABLE IV-5 -- Continued

Subject Matter Method Orientation	Chronological Age and Sex					
	Male			Female		
	21-39 Years	40-59 Years	60 and Older	21-39 Years	40-59 Years	60 and Older
Religion, Morals, and Ethics						
Group	59%	66%	46%	67%	62%	41%
Individual	41	34	54	33	38	59
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	87	89	57	111	102	90
	X^2 = 6.118	P = .05	$\overline{C}$ = .23	X^2 = 14.461	P = .001	$\overline{C}$ = .31
Academic or General Education						
Group	80%	75%	67%	79%	68%	58%
Individual	20	25	33	21	32	42
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	88	88	51	110	102	85
	X^2 = 2.849	P = N. S.		X^2 = 10.450	P = .01	C = .27

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' METHOD ORIENTATIONS FOR STUDYING DIFFERENT SUBJECT MATTER BY FAMILY INCOME AND SEX

	Family Income and Sex					
	Male			Female		
Subject Matter Method Orientation	$4,999 or Less	$5,000 - $9,999	$10,000 or More	$4,999 or Less	$5,000 - $9,999	$10,000 or More
Vocational						
Group	67%	78%	76%	67%	80%	91%
Individual	33	22	24	33	20	9
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	51	115	42	66	112	46
	$X^2 = 2.573$	P = N. S.		$X^2 = 10.197$	P = .01	$\overline{C} = .30$
Hobbies and Recreation						
Group	57%	63%	56%	64%	72%	71%
Individual	43	37	44	36	28	29
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	61	121	41	101	131	52
	$X^2 = .833$	P = N. S.		$X^2 = 1.596$	P = N. S.	

TABLE 5 -- Continued

Subject Matter Method Orientation	Family Income and Sex: Male $4,999 or Less	Male $5,000 - $9,999	Male $10,000 or More	Female $4,999 or Less	Female $5,000 - $9,999	Female $10,000 or More
Religion, Morals, and Ethics						
Group	71%	56%	78%	49%	62%	69%
Individual	29	44	22	51	38	31
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	67	119	41	104	131	52
	X^2 = 8.354	P = .02	$\overline{C}$ = .27	X^2 = 6.902	P = .05	$\overline{C}$ = .22
Academic or General Education						
Group	72%	72%	84%	60%	71%	82%
Individual	28	28	16	40	29	18
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	57	119	45	100	129	51
	X^2 = 2.861	P = N. S.		X^2 = 8.394	P = .02	$\overline{C}$ = .25
Home and Family Life						
Group	42%	45%	49%	35%	45%	46%
Individual	58	55	51	65	55	54
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	65	120	41	100	132	52
	X^2 = .543	P = N. S.		X^2 = 2.759	P = N. S.	

TABLE 5 -- Continued

Subject Matter Method Orientation	Family Income and Sex: Male $4,999 or Less	Male $5,000 - $9,999	Male $10,000 or More	Female $4,999 or Less	Female $5,000 - $9,999	Female $10,000 or More
Personal Development						
Group	58%	70%	66%	55%	73%	66%
Individual	42	30	34	45	27	34
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	60	122	44	101	128	50
	$X^2 = 2.302$	P = N. S.		$X^2 = 7.389$	P = .025	C = .23
Current Events, Public Affairs, Citizenship						
Group	33%	38%	52%	36%	44%	51%
Individual	67	62	48	64	56	49
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	69	121	44	107	132	51
	$X^2 = 4.217$	P - N. S.		$X^2 = 3.738$	P = N. S.	

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